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54 Plated shaped product of polyamide and its production.

57 In electroplating of a shaped product of a composition comprising a polyamide, the incorporation of powdery wollastonite as a filler in a content of 30 to 60 % by weight based on the composition is effective in forming a plated film on the shaped product, the plated film having an excellent appearance and a high adhesive strength. Prior to said electroplating, the use of a 4 to 15% by weight aqueous solution of hydrochloric acid or sulfuric acid for etching can enhance the adhesive strength markedly.

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PLATED SHAPED PRODUCT OF POLYAMIDE AND ITS PRODUCTION

The present invention relates to a plated shaped product of a polyamide, and its production. More particularly, it relates to a plated shaped product of a polyamide having good physical properties, characterized in that
5 the plated film at the surface has an excellent appearance and a high adhesive strength, and its production.

Hitherto, plated products of ABS resins have been widely used for manufacture of parts of automobiles, electric apparatuses, general merchandises, etc. Since,
10 however, ABS resins are not satisfactory in heat resistance, mechanical strength and modulus, their plated products have been mainly employed for decorative purposes. In recent

~~years, the necessity of making the weight of automobiles~~
light is increased for saving energy costs and the
15 appearance of plated products of plastics having excellent
~~heat resistance, mechanical strength and modulus is highly~~
demanded. In view of such demand, the plating of polyamides has been studied, but the resulting products are not
satisfactory in the appearance or adhesive strength of the
20 plated film. Namely, the one excellent in appearance is insufficient in adhesive strength, while the one excellent in adhesive strength is unsatisfactory in appearance.

As a result of the extensive study, it has now been found that the incorporation of powdery wollastonite
25 into a polyamide is effective in improvement of the appearance and adhesive strength of the plated film formed on

a shaped product made of the wollastonite-incorporated polyamide without deterioration of the excellent physical properties inherent to the polyamide.

According to the present invention, there is
5 provided a composition comprising a polyamide as the major component and powdery wollastonite as a filler in a content of 30 to 60 % by weight based on the weight of the composition.

The polyamide as the major component is intended
10 to mean a high molecular weight polymer in which amide linkages (CONH) occur along the molecular chain and includes the self-polycondensation product of a lactam, the polycondensation product between a diamine and a dibasic acid, the self-polycondensation product of ω -amino acid, the
15 copolymerized product of two or more chosen from the monomeric substances as stated above, etc. Typical examples of the polyamide are nylon 6, nylon 11, nylon 66, nylon 610 etc. Any particular limitation is not present, though nylon 6 and nylon 66 are favorable in view of their excellent heat
20 resistance, mechanical strength and modulus. These polyamides may be used alone or in combination.

Wollastonite comprises mainly calcium silicate
($\text{CaO} \cdot \text{SiO}_2$). Advantageously, a shaped product made of the wollastonite-incorporated polyamide does not produce any
25 considerable depression in strength at the welding portion, and in this respect, wollastonite is more favorable than other fillers such as glass fibers, carbon fibers, talc,

mica and uncalcined clay. It is also advantageous that a shaped product made of the wollastonite-incorporated polyamide is apt to be etched appropriately with an aqueous solution of an inorganic acid.

5 The average particle size of powdery wollastonite may be not more than 10 μ , preferably not more than 5 μ . When the particle size is more than 10 μ , the roughening resulting from etching is too much so that a beautiful appearance is hardly obtainable at the surface of the shaped
10 product after plating. The amount of powdery wollastonite to be incorporated into the polyamide is from 30 to 60 % by weight, preferably from 40 to 50 % by weight, based on the weight of the composition. When the amount is less than 30
15 % by weight, the resulting shaped product is insufficient in heat resistance, mechanical strength and modulus. When more than 60 % by weight, the molding and processing property are deteriorated, and a shaped product having a uniform and flat surface is hardly obtainable. Thus, the appearance after
20 plating is poor.

20 Besides, the polyamide may be incorporated with any conventional additive for improvement or modification of its property such as a heat-resistant agent, an aging-
25 preventing agent, a weather resistant agent, a nucleating agent, a lubricant, a pigment and an impact resistant agent.

25 The polyamide incorporated with powdery wollastonite and any other optional component(s) may be molded in any per se conventional procedure to make a shaped

product. Usually, their mixture is once pelletized and then molded in a melt state of the polyamide.

The shaped product thus prepared may be plated by a per se conventional procedure. A typical example of such conventional procedure comprises the following steps:

5 surface adjustment —→ degreasing —→ etching —→ neutralizing —→ catalyst-accelerator (or sensitizing-activating) —→ electroless plating —→ electroplating (copper, nickel, chromium). More in detail, the typical

10 procedure comprises: a surface adjustment step for removing flaw, fin, etc. on the surface of the shaped product; a degreasing step for removing oil stain and the like which adheres to the surface of the shaped product; a physical or chemical etching step for rendering the surface of the

15 shaped product hydrophilic; a neutralizing step for removing chromium transferred from the etching bath; a catalyst treatment step for depositing palladium or the like on the surface which has been rendered hydrophilic; an accelerator treatment step for activating the deposited palladium or the

20 like; an electroless plating step for precipitating a metallic thin film of nickel or copper on the surface of the shaped product by the use of palladium metal or the like as a catalyst; and an electroplating step with copper, nickel, chromium, etc. After each step as above, water-rinsing is

25 usually applied to the treated product. Any of these steps including water-rinsing may be omitted or modified depending upon the purpose, situation, condition, chemicals, etc.

Still, the steps to be applied before the electroless plating are called the pre-treatment steps.

In the present invention, the etching step may be accomplished preferably by the use of an aqueous solution of hydrochloric acid and/or sulfuric acid in a concentration of 4 to 15 % by weight, particularly 5 to 8 % by weight, for assuring a higher adhesive strength of the plated film to be formed on the shaped product. When the concentration is less than 4 % by weight, the effect of etching is low so that a long time is needed for roughening. When the concentration is more than 15 % by weight, roughening is too much so that the appearance and adhesive strength of the plated film are deteriorated. Etching may be carried out usually at a temperature of room temperature (around 0 to 30°C) to 50°C for a period of 1 to 30 minutes. Since the polyamide absorbs water resulting in lowering of the mechanical strength and modulus, it is preferred to accomplish the etching at a lower temperature within a shorter period of time for suppressing the water-absorption.

Immediate rinsing of the thus etched product with water sometimes causes whitening so that the adhesive strength of the plated film formed thereon after plating may be lowered. In order to solve this problem, the adoption of post-etching is recommended. This post-etching may be effected by dipping the above etched product in an aqueous solution of an inorganic acid in a concentration of 0.5 to 4 % by weight for a period of 0.5 to 2 minutes. As the

inorganic acid, there may be used hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, phosphoric acid, etc., though hydrochloric acid can be the most favorably employed. By such post-etching, a swelling layer of small strength at the surface may be selectively eliminated.

The plated product obtained by this invention is provided with a plated film at the surface, the plated film having an excellent appearance and a high adhesive strength. Usually, the adhesive strength of the plated film is not less than 2.4 kg/cm. The plated product has excellent physical properties inherent to the polyamide. Therefore, it can be used as a substitute for metals in manufacture of heat resistant accessories, mirror surfaces, housings, door knobs, back mirror holders, window handles, wheel caps, etc. Advantageously, the wollastonite-incorporated polyamide can be molded more easily than metals and shows a higher heat resistance than ABS resins.

Throughout the specification, the term "adhesive strength" is intended to mean the peeling strength of a plated film formed on the surface of a shaped product, and the peeling strength may be indicated by the strength per unit width (kg/cm), which is determined by making a cut in a rectangular form of 1 cm wide on the plated film and peeling off the cut with a rate of 30 mm/minute at an angle of 90°.

This invention will be explained more in detail by the following Examples wherein % is by weight.

Example 1

Pellets of a polyamide containing a filler in a content of 40 % based on the weight of the polyamide were dried at 100°C under reduced pressure for 15 hours, molded by the use of a molding apparatus having a cylinder temperature of 270°C, a mold temperature of 100°C and an injection pressure of 600 kg/cm² to make a shaped product of 70 mm x 150 mm x 3 mm as a test piece. The shaped product was subjected to etching with 6 % aqueous solution of hydrochloric acid at 40°C for 10 minutes and then to post-etching with 3 % aqueous solution of hydrochloric acid at 40°C for 1 minute. The etched product was subjected to electroless plating in the manner as shown in Table 1. The electroless plated product was subjected to electroplating in a plating bath comprising cupric sulfate (200 g/L) and conc. sulfuric acid (96 %; 50 ml/L) at an initial current density of 0.5 A/dm² for 10 minutes and at a current density of 3 A/dm² for 120 minutes to make a plated film of 50 μ in thickness.

After each of the above treatments, the treated product was rinsed with water. The plated product was subjected to determination of the adhesive strength of the plated film.

The results are shown in Table 2, from which it is understood that the practically acceptable adhesive strength can be achieved only when wollastonite is used as the filler, and insofar as wollastonite is employed, a remarkable adhesive strength is produced irrespective of the kind of the polyamide.

Table 1

Step	Treatment	Treating solutions	Treating conditions
1	Catalyst	"Catalyst" (manufactured by Okuno Seiyaku Kogyo K.K.). 20 ml/L conc. Sulfuric acid 50 ml/L	40°C, 2 minutes
2	Accelerator	conc. Sulfuric acid 20 ml/L	40°C, 2 minutes
3	Post-accelerator	Sodium hydroxide 5 g/L	40°C, 2 minutes
4	Electroless nickel-plating	Nickel sulfate Sodium hypophosphite Sodium citrate Ammonia water 30 g/L 20 g/L 40 g/L 25 ml/L	40°C, 5 minutes

Table 2

Polyamide	Nylon 6	Nylon 66	Nylon 6	Nylon 6	Nylon 6	Nylon 6	Nylon 6
Filler	Wollasto- nite	Wollasto- nite	Glass fiber	Talc	Mica	Clay	
Average particle size (μ)	8	8	13	5	9	1	
Adhesive strength (kg/cm)	2.8	2.5	1.0	0.3	0.3	0.4	

Example 2

In the same manner as in Example 1, a shaped product was prepared by the use of pellets of Nylon 6 containing powdery wollastonite as a filler and subjected to etching, post-etching and electroless plating. Then, the electroless plated product was subjected to electroplating in the manner as shown in Table 3. Observation was made on the appearance of the thus plated product.

Separately, the said pellets were molded to make test pieces according to ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials), and the test pieces were subjected to measurement of heat deformation temperature, flexural strength and flexural modulus.

The results are shown in Table 4, from which it is understood that the heat resistance, mechanical strength and modulus of the shaped product are lowered when the content of the filler is less than 30 %, and the appearance of the plated product becomes poor when the content of the filler is more than 60 %. It is also understood that the appearance of the plated product is somewhat deteriorated in case of the average particle size of the filler being more than 10 μ .

Table 3

Step	Treatment	Treating solutions	Treating conditions
1	Nickel strike plating	Nickel sulfate Ammonium chloride pH = 5	200 g/L 30 g/L 35°C, 0.5 A/dm ² , 5 minutes,
2	Cupric sulfate plating	Cupric sulfate Sulfuric acid Gloss agent	250 g/L 50 g/L Small 35°C, 3 A/dm ² , 30 minutes
3	Gloss nickel plating	Nickel sulfate Nickel chloride Boric acid Gloss agent	300 g/L 60 g/L 50 g/L Small 50°C, 3 A/dm ² , 20 minutes
4	Chromium plating	Chromic acid Sulfuric acid	250 g/L 2.5 g/L 45°C, 20 A/dm ² , 2 minutes

Table 4

Content of filler (%)	40	40	40	25	60	70
Average particle size (μ)	3	8	13	3	3	3
Heat deformation temperature ($^{\circ}\text{C}$)	145	143	141	118	161	165
186 kg/cm^2						
Flexural strength (kg/cm^2)	1,180	1,200	1,180	900	1,100	800
Flexural modulus (kg/cm^2)	54,000	52,000	54,000	38,000	70,000	76,000
Appearance	Good	Good	Some- what poor	Good	Good	Poor

Example 3

In the same manner as in Example 1, a shaped product was prepared by the use of pellets of Nylon 6 containing as a filler powdery wollastonite of 8 μ in average particle size in a content of 40 %. The shaped product was etched with aqueous solution of hydrochloric acid at 40°C for 10 minutes, optionally followed by post-etching with 3 % aqueous solution of hydrochloric acid at 40°C for 1 minute. The etched product was electroless plated and then electroplated as in Example 1. The plated product was subjected to determination of the adhesive strength of the plated film.

The results are shown in Table 5, from which it is understood that the adhesive strength is much enhanced by application of post-etching. It is also understood that the adhesive strength is influenced by the concentration of hydrochloric acid in the etching solution.

Table 5

20	Concentration of hydrochloric acid (%)	3	6	15	20	6	15
	Post-etching	Done	Done	Done	Done	Not done	Not done
	Adhesive strength (kg/cm)	1.4	2.8	2.7	1.6	0.5	1.2

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CLAIMS:

1. A composition which comprises a polyamide as the major component and powdery wollastonite as a filler in an amount of 30 to 60 % by weight based on the weight of the composition.
2. The composition according to claim 1, wherein the amount of the wollastonite is 40 to 50 % by weight.
3. The composition according to claim 1, wherein the wollastonite has an average particle size of not more than 10 μ .
4. The composition according to claim 3, wherein the average particle size of the wollastonite is not more than 5 μ .
5. A shaped product of the composition according to claim 1.
6. A plated product of the shaped product according to claim 5.
7. The plated product according to claim 6, which has a plated film at the surface, the adhesive strength of the plated film being not less than 2.4 kg/cm.

8. A method for preparation of a plated product which comprises electroplating a shaped product of the composition according to claim 1.

9. The method according to claim 8, wherein the shaped product is etched with a 4 to 15 % by weight aqueous solution of hydrochloric acid and/or sulfuric acid prior to the electroplating.

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein the etched product is post-etched with a 0.5 to 4 % by weight aqueous solution of an inorganic acid prior to the electroplating.



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

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DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. 7)
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	
X	<u>GB - A - 1 469 791</u> (HOECHST AKTIENGESELLSCHAFT) * Page 1, lines 25-34; page 3, lines 106-110; claims 1-3 * --	1-5	C 08 L 77/00 C 08 K 3/20 C 08 K 3/36 C 25 D 5/56
Y	<u>US - A - 4 052 350</u> (T. SHIOHARA et al.) * Abstract; column 1, lines 47-52; examples; claims * --	1-5	
Y	<u>US - A - 3 925 302</u> (J. MAGDER et al.) * Claims; especially claim 10 * --	1-5	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. 7) C 08 L C 08 K C 25 D
Y	<u>US - A - 3 661 538</u> (P.T. BROWN et al.) * Abstract; claims * ----	1,8,9	
			CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X: particularly relevant if taken alone Y: particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A: technological background O: non-written disclosure P: intermediate document T: theory or principle underlying the invention E: earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D: document cited in the application L: document cited for other reasons
X The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			&: member of the same patent family, corresponding document
Place of search VIENNA		Date of completion of the search 23-03-1982	Examiner SLAMA

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